

Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Strategy

Public Consultation

A public consultation period was undertaken during October and November 2006 on the draft Lake Mokoan Future Land Use Strategy (FLUS). Twenty five submissions were received, sixteen from individuals and nine from organisations or groups. Fourteen of the submissions were either supportive or very supportive of the FLUS and five were not supportive. The remaining six submissions either did not state or it was unclear whether or not they supported the FLUS.

Overall many of the submissions generally support the directions outlined in the FLUS. Many of the comments will assist in the implementation of the FLUS program. A number of issues will be covered with the development of more detailed management plans. These plans will involve discussions and involvement with key stakeholder groups including all groups that have commented on the FLUS.

The table provides general and specific comments on the FLUS made in each submission. Each specific comment was addressed in terms of how it related to the FLUS and also the impact on the FLUS and its implementation. A more detailed summary of all submissions has also been prepared.

Issue	Comment	General Response
Funding	There were numerous submissions, which identified adequate resourcing of the FLUS implementation as an important issue. The level of government support for the implementation of the FLUS is seen as important to the success of the decommissioning in restoration and attracting tourism to the region.	The budget for decommissioning Lake Mokoan includes sufficient funding the rehabilitation of the wetland (\$2.5 million plus the revenue generated from the sale of land).
Governance	Governance of the future implementation of the FLUS is seen as an important issue. There has been particular concern raised over the land management of the site in the future.	A key action will be to determine governance arrangement including community involvement
Forestry impacts	There was concern raised over the potential impacts of forestry on the surrounding area. This may be attributed to water use by plantations, which may have an impact on water flows into the wetland.	The Strategy has identified the potential impacts of Forestry on the future wetland as an issue. The Strategy recommends that ground/surface water modelling be undertaken by plantation forestry proponents, to assess the impacts of plantation forestry on the hydrology of the wetland. For potential forestry within the wetland complex it is suggested that an environmental assessment be undertaken.

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Forestry restrictions	The FLUS states that plantations should be restricted due to potential impacts on the surrounding area, namely the wetland. DPI and the forestry industry have raised concerns over these restrictions, as they are not consistent with state legislation dealing with plantation forestry.	State policy and strategies will be considered in the implementation of the FLUS and subject to further investigations of the potential impacts of forestry.
Land use and impacts on the wetland	Issues were raised as to the potential land use surrounding the wetland. The submissions identified covenants and land use restrictions as an important component in protecting the wetland.	Planning controls need to be developed in conjunction with Benalla Rural City and may involved covenants on certain areas adjacent to the wetland.
Pest plant and animal control	Some submissions raised concerns that the area will become infested with pest plants and animals. It is important that pest plant and animal control is adequately funded and implemented.	A rehabilitation plan will be developed in the decommissioning phase. Pest plants and animals have been identified as a threat and will be dealt with through the development of this plan. On ground work is currently being undertaken on key threat species in conjunction with G-M Water.
Tourism Infrastructure	It was important from submissions that tourism infrastructure is implemented early so as to attract visitors to the site. This includes boardwalks and walking trails, interpretive signage and other associated tourism facilities. The submissions also stated that government funding is required for the establishment of these facilities.	Tourism infrastructure has been identified as an important component to attract visitors but also for local residents. Some infrastructure establishment is planned for the first 8 years.
Monitoring program	This issue is important to ensure appropriate restoration and adaptive management practices.	A monitoring plan is being developed to assess the effectiveness of management plans such as restoration. Some monitoring will commence in 2006/07.
Indigenous Issues	It is important that indigenous issues are dealt with through the relevant local communities.	A protocol will be developed dealing with indigenous issues in the implementation of the FLUS. An indigenous group will work with relevant agencies to provide advice throughout implementation.
Water Manipulation	Some submissions also thought that the management of the wetland should include the capacity to manipulate water depth. This was to ensure water in the wetland so as to attract visitors and locals alike to utilise the wetland area.	The Winton swamp previously was an ephemeral wetland. Wetting and drying is an important component of a healthy wetland. The modelling shows that the wetland will be dry 3 to 4 times a century and the dry periods will be an important component in interpretation and education.

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Infrastructure – Access via roads	Access to the site was also seen as an issue. Roads around the southern area are unsealed and dry weather only roads. The upgrade of these roads was seen as important as is who would pay for these roads.	The FLUS recommends a roading network within the wetland area. Several roads adjoining the FLUS and important for access are also proposed for upgrade. A road management plan is recommended if required for other roads outside the scope of the FLUS.
Hunting and Fishing	Some submissions wanted duck hunting and fishing banned from the wetland. The submissions sighted that hunting and fishing were not compatible with the wetland area. One submission, from a relevant Association, strongly supported the continuation of hunting and fishing should continue. Hunting and fishing were allowed previously on the Winton swamp prior to the establishment of Lake Mokoan and hence they should continue.	Fishing, especially from boats may be unlikely to occur due to depth level of the lake. There may be the opportunity for some land based fishing. Duck hunting within the wetland complex will depend on land classification and suitability with the wetland complex. This will be determined through a management planning process.
Loss of community asset	Lake Mokoan as community asset, particularly for sailing and fishing which would be lost from the region. This would impact on businesses in the area, which derived income from the current Lake Mokoan.	The activities around Lake Mokoan will change from sailing and fishing to nature walks, kayaking and camping. There is an opportunity for businesses to generate income from these activities and those who participate in them.
Fire Management	As with pest management, submissions received viewed the decommissioning as resulting in an increased fire risk for the area. It is important to have appropriate funding for fire management for the future wetland not only in fire suppression but also on going management of fire breaks etc.	A Fire Management Plan will be developed for the rehabilitated area with involvement from various fire protection agencies.
Land tenure	Two submissions received from environmental organisations suggested that the restored wetland could potentially become part of a larger national park with the Warby Ranges.	The classification of the Winton wetland has not been resolved. The potential to combine the wetland complex with other parks and reserves needs to be investigated.
Flood Control	A number of submissions raised concern that the decommissioning will increase the flood risk to residents in the region.	This issue is generally outside the scope of the FLUS and has been investigated through other studies. In general, Lake Mokoan was built as a water storage facility, not as a flood mitigation structure. The removal of Lake Mokoan from the irrigation system will not result in any significant changes to flood mitigation.